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HONGKONG TRADING COMPANY, LIMITED.
Hongkong, 17th March, 1880.

good deal about the heavenly bodies without ever actually visiting them, and a non-official need not be an oracle to acquire some little knowledge of the work of Government offices, which are hardly such mysterious institutions as Mr. Lister would have us think. A very ordinary intelligence can easily be obtained in filling his post from one or other of the sources available. It is unnecessary, therefore, to keep an Assistant Harbour Master specially for that purpose, and the idea that there is any real work attaching to his own office is, as a lady might say, all staff and nonsense.

A telegram was received yesterday by the Agent of the Straits Insurance Company informing him that the Directors had declared a bonus of 10 per cent to contributors on the business of 1889.

The steamer vessel *Albion* steamed round from Tsim Bay yesterday morning and is to go into dock at Kowloon on Saturday. It is reported that she touched a rock on the other side. We also hear that some of the torpedo boats have been accepted a great deal of purely clerical work. But the was nevertheless able to go away for ten months; apparently without leaving a *locum tenens*, and on his return was able to work up the ten months' arrears of his own and his chief's work.

To judge whether the Harbour Master requires an assistant or not it is important to consider what the Harbour Master's own work is. If the gentleman holding the appointment chose to keep the books of his department with his own hand he could of course make as much work as he liked. But that is not the kind of work for which he is appointed. For the discharge of the clerical work he is provided with a staff of clerks. His own work is of a different description. He has some responsibility as Education Officer, but the actual work of examining the emigrants devolves on one of the clerks. Then he is required four or five times a year to preside over a Marine Court of Inquiry; and occasionally he has to try a case of refusal of duty, perhaps once or twice a month. These are what may be called his specific duties, such as could be entered in a time book if one were kept. His general duties are to make himself acquainted with all matters relating to the harbour, and to place himself in a position to advise the Government upon such questions as the placing of a light-house, or the expediency of attempting to remove obstructions to navigation. He has of course to administer his department, that is, to satisfy himself that his officers properly discharge their duties, to recommend applications for leave, and so on, but in a properly organised department all this involves little more actual labour than the regular winding of a clock. The routine work of noting entrances and clearances, etc., is performed by the clerical staff.

It will not be the duty of the Assistant Harbour Master to pass emigrants, nor to preside over Naval Courts of Inquiry, nor to act as Marine Magistrate. In what work then is he to assist the Harbour Master? There is the examination of masters and mates. The work involved in this occupies but a very short time in the course of a year, and it is doubtful whether it is legal for any but the Harbour Master himself to preside over it. Then there is the collection of light dues—purely routine work performed by the clerks. But the great thing, we are told, is the registration of junks. Is this work requiring such exceptional qualifications that a naval officer has to be brought all the way from Jamaica for it? The idea is absurd. It may be admitted that when registration was first commenced the creation of a system involved some considerable amount of work; but when the system was once got into working order, whatever necessity there may have been for a highly trained officer to devote his whole or the principal portion of his time to its supervision disappeared. It would be interesting to know whether it was thoroughly explained to Captain HASTINGS when he was appointed that though his title was to be Assistant Harbour Master his duties were to be those of a simple registration clerk. As a matter of fact, for years past the Assistant Harbour Master has had no more to do with the registration of junks than with any other branch of the department.

We were always under the impression that the office of Assistant Harbour Master was created in order to provide an appointment for one of the Passed Cadets of those days. Mr. Lister tells us it was created to provide for the proper registration of junks. But whatever the idea may have been, the fact is that his very clearly proved that the Harbour Master can now get on very well without an assistant. We have Mr. Lister's own experience; he was able to discharge the duties of Harbour Master, Assistant Harbour Master, Sheriff, and Coroner. Then we have the further evidence that whenever the Harbour Master or Assistant Harbour Master has been absent the whole of the work has been performed by the one remaining. Mr. DEANE said on Wednesday that there had been an Assistant Harbour Master ever since the appointment was first established except during the last eighteen months. The late Captain was evidently speaking under a misconception. After the death of Mr. MacEwan he would have been otherwise provided for. Mr. MacEwan was appointed in 1875, but he was always looked upon as an old man unable to act for other officers whenever required; and when he was taken away from the Harbour Office to act as Deputy Superintendent of Police or as Superintendent of the Gaol it was not thought necessary to appoint any one to fill his place at the Harbour Office; and the same way when the Harbour Master has been absent the Assistant has been able to combine the duties of the two offices without inconvenience.

The question of who is to act for the Harbour Master when he goes away on leave or is sick—i.e. which deserves consideration, but it can hardly be contended that it is necessary to maintain a naval officer permanently as an Assistant Harbour Master merely in order to provide a substitute for the Harbour Master on such occasions. If there were objections to appointing one of the gentlemen acting as private surveyors any member of the Civil Service of the Colony might be appointed Acting Harbour Master, for assistance could readily be obtained from the Navy for the proper conduct of Courts of Inquiry or other matters requiring technical training. Mr. Lister has had no nautical training but he tells us that he did all the work of the Harbour Master during

the time the late Captain CAIRNS nominally held the office, and presumably he did satisfactorily. In the event of the Harbour Master's going away or falling sick there would be no difficulty in filling his post from one or other of the sources available. It is unnecessary, therefore, to keep an Assistant Harbour Master specially for that purpose, and the idea that there is any real work attaching to his own office is, as a lady might say, all staff and nonsense.

The following correspondence is published in appendix to the annual report of the Hongkong General Chamber of Commerce.

THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND THE EMIGRATION LAWS.

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Hongkong, 23rd Sept., 1880.

Sir—I have the honour to inform you that on the 22nd of July last His Excellency was pleased to appoint Mr. Layton, Capt. R.N., Dr. Ho Kai, and myself to be a Committee for the purpose of formulating suggestions for the revision of the laws relating to Chinese emigration and for the better suppression of emigration abuses.

—After collecting considerable information and discussing at length the nature of the various offences, and the remedies proposed for them, Dr. Ho Kai and myself to be a Committee for the purpose of formulating suggestions for the revision of the laws relating to Chinese emigration and for the better suppression of emigration abuses.

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